

Inside U.S. Embassy Tirana

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Welcome to the second edition of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana's online newsletter, "Inside U.S. Embassy Tirana." This May we celebrated Memorial Day and I hope that we will all take a moment to reflect on what our brave service men and women, both Albanian and American, have done in efforts to bring peace and prosperity to this world.

I have personally visited several cities in this great country of Albania. From Shkodër to Gjirokaster, I have seen with my own eyes the generous, hardworking, and gracious nature of the Albanian people. I like to remind everyone that I am not the U.S. Ambassador to "Tirana" but the U.S. Ambassador to all of Albania. So, I look forward to my visits to other cities in Albania throughout the rest of my tenure here.

We have highlighted efforts this month to promote the bilateral relationship between the United States and Albania. As always, for a fuller view of what is happening in our mission feel free to visit our website at <http://tirana.usembassy.gov/>, or the Embassy's facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tirana-Albania/US-Embassy-Tirana/74591195837>.

Students of Elbasan Meet America



On May 29th, a class of students from the "Aleksander Xhuvani" University in Elbasan visited the Embassy as part of the "Meet America" Program. On this visit the students met with Public Affairs Officer Bix Aliu and Consular Officer Abby Aronson who spoke to the students about the work of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana as well as the specific roles and functions of their perspective offices. The visit concluded with a special visit from Ambassador John Withers. The students asked the Ambassador a variety of questions, ranging from differences between the American and Albanian forms of government, as well as the role of Albania into NATO. The Ambassador expressed to the students how much he loves his

job and how much he appreciates meeting students who are going to be the future leaders of this wonderful country.

Ambassador Withers Swears in New Peace Corps Volunteers

On May 28 Ambassador Withers took part in a Peace Corps' Swearing In Ceremony to welcome 33 new volunteers to Albania. The ceremony was held in the Skampa Theater and was also attended by the Mayor of Elbasan, Qazim Sejдини.



Art and Culture Break Down Barriers



On May 27, PAO Bix Aliu appeared as a special guest on TV Klan's popular show "Star Academy". On the special "America Night," all the competitors sang and danced to American music. Bix congratulated the show's host Zana Çela for supporting the development of art and culture and for turning dreams into reality. Commenting on a footage that showed the competitors talking about the elections, Bix noted the quick progress that Albania's youth has made in their democratic development. "I've noticed that these young people have torn down barriers. They understand that individual democratic development is very important and

that the right to vote and civic participation is big a responsibility...tonight, these young people showed what art and culture can make possible, like no diplomacy can."

Students of Gjirokaštër Meet America



On May 28th, a group of students from the "Naim Frasheri" Elementary School in Gjirokaštër visited the Embassy as part of the "Meet America" Program. The students met with the Information Resource Center Director who spoke to the students about the activities and services of the Information Resource Center. The highlight of their visit to the Embassy was the meeting with Ambassador John Withers. The students asked the Ambassador a variety of questions, ranging from President Obama, the differences between the American and Albanian forms of government, as well as the degree of difficulty to which the Ambassador finds his job. The Ambassador expressed to the students how much he loves his job and how much he appreciates the Albanian people and their hospitality.

US Diplomat Interviewed by American Press



While in her hometown in Massachusetts this month, USAID/Albania's Mission Director, Roberta Mahoney, met with her local newspaper, the Stoneham Sun, about how she entered the Foreign Service, her work as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Fiji, and USAID's program in Albania. To read the article, please visit: [Stoneham native earns top foreign post at USAID - Stoneham, MA - Stoneham Sun](#)

My Great Experience as a PAS Intern



Gazeta Shqiptare printed on Wednesday, May 27, an interview with Ira Salataj, who was the first participant in the Embassy's new Local Internship Program. Ira is a student of American studies at the Albanian University of Foreign Languages. "I learned a lot, from small things like creating a draft, to important ones, like communication, team work, and being professional", Ira noted. Asked about her favorite project she said it was hard for her to choose because all of them, from Sean Thomas Dougherty visit in Albania to Eli Yamin Blues Band concert, were exciting and very useful in improving her professional skills. "It was a great opportunity for me and I

recommend it to all Albanian students. This internship program, supported by PAO Bix Aliu, aims to become a traditional program."

USAID Hosts Environmental Management and Compliance Workshop with Albanian Organizations, Partners

Environmental sustainability is integral to the United States commitment to support broad-based economic growth, environmental protection, democracy, and health in Albania. To meet this goal, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) incorporates environmental considerations into all foreign assistance programs and activities. USAID/Albania, in collaboration with USAID's Bureau of Environment Officer for Europe and Eurasia, Mr. Mohammad A. Latif, hosted a three-day workshop on Environmental Management and Compliance, May 19-21, 2009 to help public and private sector implementing partners and host-country governmental institutions learn how to design, implement, and sustain environmentally sound development projects and activities. For current and potential USAID partners, this training will also help build local capacity in smart development and knowledge of USAID environmental procedures and regulations. The workshop also included inter-agency participation from the Millennium Challenge Corporation Albania Threshold II Program.



Ambassador Hands Out Tirana Open Cup

Ambassador Withers, an avid tennis player, was honored to be able to hand the coveted Tirana Open "Perlat Voshtina" Cup to the winner on May 26. The Ambassador noted the importance of sports in any society and explained how "tennis" is "tennis" in any language...a court with boundaries and a net...and that sports break down many barriers. He urged spectators to support the development of tennis and other sports in Albania and complimented the players for their "Federer and Nadal like qualities."



Ambassador Withers Supports Women in Politics



On May 26, Ambassador Withers gave remarks at the graduation ceremony for participants of NDI's program "Developing New Political Leaders: Increasing Women's Participation." The program trained a group of thirty politically active and geographically diverse women. President Topi also attended, and emphasized the importance of the role of women in politics and society. Ambassador Withers noted "...It's not about percentages, it's not about precise rules the establish quotas, it is about achieving the place you (women) deserve. The more equal women are in society the better the life will be for this generation, for the next generation, for the generations that follow..." The audience included

women members of political parties, civil society, representatives of the diplomatic corps, and media. The event had live and extensive coverage by prominent media outlets.

PAO Lectures at Faculty of Journalism



Bix Aliu lectured to over 100 students of journalism at the Faculty of Journalism in Tirana on May 26. Bix explained the role of the U.S. Embassy Press Office, explained the role of the Embassy spokesperson and discussed ethics in journalism. The students asked questions ranging from those on professionalism in the workplace to the methodology of relationship development with the media.

Ambassador Withers Launches the Embassy's YouTube Page: Subscribe Today!



Ambassador Withers announces the launch of the Embassy's YouTube page. In addition to putting the U.S. Embassy Tirana in touch with a broader audience, this page will provide a closer look into the Embassy's events, activities, and initiatives. The new YouTube page is an important part of the Embassy's campaign to use new media in public outreach. You can find the Embassy's YouTube page at <http://www.youtube.com/USEmbassyTirana>.

PAO visits Kult Magazine



On May 22, PAO Bix Aliu visited Kult Magazine and met with the general director Ylli Sula and staff members. During the visit Bix highlighted that the U.S. Embassy supports art and culture development in Albania. Their discussion focused on the challenges of doing art in Albania and building a culture of merit awards among artists and in the audience. On June 10 Kult Magazine organizes the 5th edition of the Kult Awards and Director Sula extended Bix an invitation to present the "Best Cultural Program of

the Year” award in recognition of all the U.S. Embassy contribution to the Albanian cultural life. Bix discussed ways to improve the Albanian cultural scene and how the Embassy can help to support and promote the artistic community.

PAO: The Word Visionary is Most Appropriate



During a May 22 ceremony in honor of the late founder of the Top Media Group Mr. Dritan Hoxha, Bix Aliu praised Hoxha’s “endless quest for the new” and noted, “He was a true leader – strong, persistent, and impatient.” Bix credited Mr. Hoxha with contributing to Albania's dramatic change since Top Albania Radio and Top Channel were founded. The PAO likened Hoxha to NBC’s Sarnoff and said “the word visionary best describes Mr. Hoxha.”

U.S. Ambassador – Protect All Human Rights



On May 21st, Ambassador Withers was the keynote speaker at an event organized by several human rights organizations with students of the University of Tirana, on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia. After quoting Maya Angelou’s “I rise,” Withers told all those present, “The day has come to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual persons as it is a fundamental human right like any other.” According to the U.S. Ambassador, now is the time for “all of us to come together to overcome the fear and discrimination that LGBT people live with across the world, including Albania and including the U.S.” Several leading broadcasters were present at the event, which was also reported in the next day’s main dailies.

Ambassador Discusses International Politics with Albanian Students



On May 22nd, Albanian university students and professors of International Relations were invited to the Ambassador’s Residence to take part in a discussion on a range of topics. The Ambassador and his wife Dr. Maryruth Coleman welcomed the young guests and discussed the never ending road to democracy, U.S. foreign policy in general and in the Balkan countries in particular, and the upcoming Albanian Elections. The Ambassador told the students that every vote counts and that it is very important for the future of the country. He also encouraged the students to become active members of social and political life, as this will help to build the foundations of the country today as they are going to be the new leaders of tomorrow.

Albanian Fulbright Alumni Association Revitalized



On May 20th, PAO Bix Aliu and APAO Leigh Rieder met with members of the Albanian Fulbright Alumni Association (AFAA). A dynamic group of Fulbright Student, Scholar and Humphrey alumni discussed ideas on how to revitalize the life of the organization and make it useful to its members, Post outreach efforts and the Albanian society at large. The launching of the AFAA website <http://www.fulbrightalbania.org> was announced at the gathering and will be an excellent resource and instrument to keep the alumni community informed of events and activities. The group proposed establishing career advising programs, monthly meetings, and more.

Students of Pukë Meet America



On May 20th, a group of students from the "Sebah Sinani" High School in Pukë visited the Embassy as part of the "Meet America" Program. On this visit the students met with the Information Resource Director who spoke to the students about the activities and services of the Information Resource Center. The students then met with Public Affairs Officer Bix Aliu and Consular Officer Abby Aronson who spoke to the students about the work of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana as well as the specific roles and functions of their perspective offices. The visit concluded with a special visit from Ambassador John Withers. The students asked the Ambassador a variety of questions, ranging from President Obama, the differences between the American and Albanian forms of government, as well as the degree of difficulty to which the Ambassador finds his job. The Ambassador expressed to the students

how much he loves his job and how much he appreciates the Albanian people, closing with the parting message of: "Study hard and one day you could be the Albanian Ambassadors to Washington!"

University Students Rethink the Environment



Students in Fulbright Scholar Candace Calsoyas' Environmental Literature course said that they hadn't been on such a lively nature trip since they were children. Calsoyas, whose course at the University of Tirana looks at American environmental history, provided a hands-on experiential component at Tirana Lake. Students forgot their fears of bugs and snakes and listened to the sounds of nature, then wrote about or painted their impressions. The highlight of the day was "a blindfolding" in which one partner led another, introducing textures of plants and trees, and flower aromas. Students exclaimed that they had

a heightened experience of feeling and sensing what plants are, listening to birdsong and appreciating nature. One student said, "I had forgotten the wonderful days I spent at the lake as a child, picnicking with friends." Want to reignite your own appreciation of nature? Simply listen to the birdsong and notice the shade the trees provide as you go about your daily business.

Ambassador Keynotes at National Day in Support of Orphans

On May 19th, Ambassador Withers spoke at ceremony of the award's presentation by President Topi to the National Institute for Albanian Orphans Integration. The ceremony is part of a series of events in commemoration of May 20th - Albanian National Day in Support of Orphans, organized under the hospices of the First Lady Teuta Topi. Well-known Albanian artists, intellectuals, NGOs, and journalists participated in this very heartfelt ceremony. Ambassador Withers said that "the children that we help and that we nurture, even the disadvantaged children who are being honored today, show their potential, realize their dreams and make the world a better place". The ceremony was extensively covered by prominent media outlets.



One of the members of the group of orphans, Donaldal, left a lasting impression on the Ambassador of herself and the group she represented. The Ambassador was so touched by Donaldal's speech, entitled "Forgiveness," he wanted to share it with you:

"We forgive those that brought us in life but couldn't raise us; We forgive those that see us everyday among them and do not support us; We forgive those that make us promises, but never keep them; We forgive all of them that did not and are not giving us the opportunity to be like all others; We forgive those that mention us only during the electoral campaigns; We forgive those that do not know what means to forgive; We forgive those that do not know that we also are citizens of the Republic of Albania; We forgive because we are equal, that's why we ask for support, integration and opportunities from our STATE that is not yet our FAMILY....; We forgive because we know what does that mean to lose the parent, family, dearest lives, the school; We forgive because we know what does that mean to be an orphan..; The HOPE is the last to die, that's why we forgive and have HOPE...."

PAO Visits Vlora



On May 18, PAO Bix Aliu visited the beautiful port city of Vlorë. While meeting with the city's Deputy Mayors, Bix discussed tourism and the upcoming general elections, commending the city on its efforts in both areas. The trip also included a visit to the city's American Corner where Bix spoke with local high school students about what it takes to become a U.S.

diplomat and answered questions regarding study in the United States, academic scholarships, and civic engagement. This successful trip to Vlorë culminated in a live interview with local television station 6+1. Portions of the interview highlighted Albania's accession into NATO, Albania's upcoming elections, as well as information on obtaining a visa to the United States.

Speaker's Bureau Engages on LGBT Issues



As part of the Embassy's Speakers Bureau Program, On May 19 Dr. Mindy Michels spoke to the Tirana University law school class of Vasilika Hysi to lead a discussion about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. Dr. Michels talked with over 100 students about discrimination, families, and the situation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Albanians. Students were animated and asked many questions ranging from the causes of homosexuality to the challenges faced by gay people living in the US and in Albania. Dr. Michels encouraged students to be open-minded in order to create a climate more accepting of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

Embassy Sponsors U.S. Study Tour for Tirana Joint Investigative Unit

Members of the Tirana Joint Investigative Unit to Fight Economic Crime and Corruption arrived in the U.S. on a study tour sponsored by the U.S. Embassy's OPDAT. The group visited various cities in the U.S., was briefed by Attorney General Eric Holder, discussed anti-corruption task forces, and visited key places of interest including the Library of Congress.



Popular Diplomat Takes Tie Off

The May issue of G magazine, a leading monthly in Albania, featured a special piece under its Gentleman section on Tirana PAO Bix Aliu and his family. "The unusually popular diplomat," talked about working in the U.S. Embassy, a job that can "keep you 18 hours working." The article notes, "We understood this family loves Albania truly...you could read it in their eyes..." Asked to comment Albania's pace of development, Bix said, "I hope all will be better. Everything will get better with time."



DCM Cristina Participates at "Security and the Future of the Western Balkan Region"



On May 15, Deputy Chief of Mission Stephen Cristina spoke at an international conference titled "Security and the future of the Western Balkan region", organized under the auspices of former President Alfred Moisiu. The conference, funded in part by the Public Affairs Office, brought together very important political personalities, researchers, civil society representatives, students of the political sciences, and media representatives from all countries of the Balkan region. Mr. Cristina stated that the United States will continue to support and encourage the EU and NATO integration of the entire Balkan region. At the opening reception of the conference, President Bamir Topi praised the conference as a valuable contribution for the future and prosperity of the region.

Ambassador: Together Against Homophobia

The May 17 edition of Albania's top circulation daily Shekulli printed an op-ed by U.S. Ambassador Withers on the occasion of the international day against homophobia. Encouraging everyone to act against discrimination, speak up, and challenge homophobia, Withers quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."



DCM: U.S. and Albania Have a Beautiful Relationship



The May 16 edition of weekly MAPO printed an interview with DCM Steve Cristina as its cover story. Cristina recalled trafficking, interference with judicial independence, minority rights, and treatment of prisoners and detainees were the main areas in which Albania needs to improve its performance, as highlighted by the annual human rights report. Cristina emphasized, "If Albania does not meet the criteria for free and fair elections that will be a step backwards for its aspirations to join the EU."

PAO Visits Daily



On May 15, PAO Bix Aliu visited the premises of mass circulation daily Gazeta Shqiptare and met with the editor and members of the staff. During the visit, PAO Aliu highlighted that the U.S. strongly supports the independence of the media and noted that no matter what the circumstances are, there should be no pressure on the media.

Visa Application Procedures Explained



Consul Abigail Aronson appeared on Top Channel's hit morning show "Wake Up" on May 14 to explain the new appointment procedure for visa applications at US Embassy Tirana. In line with improving customer service and efficiency, the Consulate is implementing an on-line visa appointment system to better serve applicants. Abby spoke about the procedures, about the visa fee (which is standard throughout the world) and explained the application process in detail - noting that there are no quotas in visa issuances or denials. Abby also spoke about how she learned Albanian and how she met her best friend Cooper (her puppy!).

U.S. Election to the Human Rights Council



Ambassador Rice (May 12): Ambassador Rice (May 12): "The United States is very pleased to be elected to join the Human Rights Council. We're particularly gratified by the strong support we received, 90 percent of the valid votes cast, and we're gratified by the strong showing of encouragement for the United States to again play a meaningful leadership role in multilateral organizations including the UN on the very vitally important set of issues relating to human rights and democracy."

DCM: Filled with Happiness to Come to Albania



On May 10, Stephen and Lea Cristina and were the key guests to leading national private broadcaster Top Channel's Sunday variety show "E Diell." DCM Cristina said coming to Albania was a choice of his and that he was filled with joy to have been able to come. The couple, scheduled to leave Albania in early July after a 3-year assignment, received a long applause when both thanked "Albanians for their extraordinary warmth and hospitality."

Speakers Bureau Explains Visa Procedures in Shkoder



On May 11, Vice Consul Shannon Behaj traveled to Shkoder as part of the Embassy's Speakers Bureau program. She spoke to over 200 people at the Faculty of Law of the University of Shkoder on how to study in the United States. Shannon also touched upon the US system of education and explained US visa procedures. A lively questions and answer session followed as Shannon tried to demystify the visa process and assure the audience that the doors to the US are wide open to legitimate travelers.

Public Affairs Officer Visits the Academy of Arts in Tirana



On May 11, PAO Bix Aliu met with leading authorities of the only higher education institution dedicated to art in Tirana and toured the premises of the Academy of Arts. Bix was accompanied by Rector Malaj and Deans Çausi, Shupo, and Spahiaj. The achievements of the students and faculty are to be complimented especially since the challenges of the establishment are great. The dedication and hard work of students from all over the country and neighboring countries, and the famous Albanian artists educating these young talents make the Academy the heart of cultural events in the Albanian capital. Bix discussed ways to improve the way this art and talent are promoted and supported by the Albanian and international community. The seeds for the first of many projects of cooperation were planted with results expected in the next few months.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Stuart Jones Visits Tirana



Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, Stuart Jones, visited Albania May 7-9, to take part in the A5 Ministerial hosted by the Albanian Government. During his visit, Deputy Assistant Secretary Jones met with the President, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and many other officials of the country.

U.S. Army Band Draws Huge Audience



On May 5th, U.S. Army Europe Commander and Conductor LTC Beth Steele spoke to popular station Vizion Plus about the band's trip and events in Albania. The 70-member band was in Albania as part of a tour in Europe that took them to Croatia, Albania, and Austria. Speaking about a music clinic the band held with 100 of "Jordan Misja" high music school students, Steele said, "It is wonderful to bridge the language and culture gap with the high school kids through the universal language of music." The Band's trip culminated in a concert performed at the Palace of Congresses on May 6th in celebration of the Albania's accession to NATO. Playing before an audience of 2,000, the Band and chorus performed a dazzling array of American pieces and musical styles and produced three standing ovations from the enthusiastic crowd. Hosted by Ambassador John Withers and President Bamir Topi, the entire concert was broadcasted by the popular media outlet, Vizion Plus.

Ambassador Withers Evokes the Spirit of Wilsonian Democracy



On May 7th, 2009, Ambassador Withers visited the complex of Wilson School to be part of their "America Days" celebration. During this visit, Ambassador Withers met with preschoolers, visited the school's facilities, and then gave remarks to more than 200 students in the school's auditorium. Ambassador Withers expressed his optimism about Albania's continuous progress in establishing a more democratic society. He spoke of the changes he witnesses every day, stating that he believes these changes are indicative of the encouraging direction in which Albania as a whole is heading. The Ambassador's remarks were followed by a Question & Answer session regarding visa regulations for graduate students, Albania's brain drain phenomenon, as well as his own high school experience. The Ambassador advised the students to study hard in order to become the young leaders of tomorrow.

Francine Prose Reads to Albanian Children



On May 5, American novelist Francine Prose, kicked off a week of activities in Albania focused on American literary trends and the life of a writer. Accompanied by PAO Bix Aliu, Ms. Prose visited the elementary school "Protagonistët," where she read her famous children's book "Leopold, the Liar of Leipzig" to 50 students. She later signed the book and presented it to the school as gift. The enthusiastic grade-schoolers engaged her in a lively Q&A about her career, work, and more, all conducted in English. In the afternoon, Ms. Prose interviewed with four media outlets where she discussed her approach to fiction and nonfiction writing, as well as why the classics are still read and appreciated. The interviews aired on Cable TV Top News, ALSAT TV, and were featured in Shekulli and Tema Newspapers.

U.S. Ambassador Commends Tirana JIU



During a May 6 ceremony to commemorate the second anniversary of the Tirana Joint Investigative Unit (JIU) and mark the establishment of six other regional JIUs across Albania, U.S. Ambassador Withers said, "The Tirana JIU is to be commended for 'doing justice' by fighting corruption...and is the model for prosecutors-police cooperation." Withers praised the prosecution office for being the most improved public institution for 2009 as shown by the USAID corruption poll released last week, while still noting, "The prosecution office still lacks the trust and support of a majority of the Albanian public." Leading broadcasters covered the event and one news-based broadcaster aired the ceremony live. The regional JIUs are part of Albania's Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold Program II.

Unprecedented Symbol of Inclusion of African-Americans in Political Life



On May 5, Dr. Maryruth Coleman continued her series of lectures at the New York University of Tirana, as part of the Embassy's Speakers Bureau program. Dr. Coleman discussed the American Presidency and Obama's First 100 days in office. Ms. Coleman gave an overview of the Presidents of the United States and the history of the presidency. She noted that Presidents have played not only a political, but also social and cultural roles in the American life. Students were eager to know which were some of the presidential successes and failures of some of the most prominent U.S. Presidents. Dr. Coleman answered questions about President Obama's progress and priority policies such as health care, education, and environment. Dr. Coleman noted that President Obama is undoubtedly an unprecedented symbol of inclusion of African-Americans in political life.

U.S. Embassy Donates Border Control Equipment



During a ceremony on May 5, Ambassador Withers handed over \$200,000 worth of detection equipment to Albanian State Police and Albanian Customs, procured through the Export Control and Border Security Assistance Program for Albania. During the ceremony, widely covered by Albania's leading broadcasters, Withers told those present, "Albanian Border Police and Customs officers are the first line of defense against the proliferation threat" and thanked them "for making Albania's borders safer." General State Police Director Ahmet Prenci thanked the lasting USG support for Albanian police.

Speaker's Bureau at the University of New York



On May 4, Mindy Michels spoke to two classes at the University of New York in Tirana on human sexuality. Mindy spoke on covered cross-cultural and historical expressions of same-sex sexuality, as well as contemporary gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identities and cultural issues in the U.S. and Albania. Students engaged in lively discussion and debate following the lecture, and posed questions about contemporary research, sexual orientation as a basis for human rights, and the situation for gay and lesbian people in Albania.

U.S. Speaker: Don't Make Our Mistakes



In a May 2 interview for Albania's top circulation daily Shekulli, U.S. Speaker Kathleen Rogers, President of the "Earth Day Network," responded to questions about Albania's plans to build coal and nuclear plants. Rogers told the paper, "There is nothing good about using coal," and "A nuclear plant is an accident waiting to happen." Speaking about her meetings with Albanian environment specialists, GOA officials, and students, Rogers said, "Albania has the extraordinary opportunity to avoid the mistakes that the U.S. made," and recommended a strong role for the press, the NGO community, and an open and honest government. During the interview with the top daily and during her May 1 appearance on the morning show of news-based TV Ora, Rogers highlighted the benefits of businesses and communities in "going green."



New NON-IMMIGRANT Visa Appointment Process

Dear non-immigrant visa applicant:



Starting June 15, 2009, you will need to schedule your own non-immigrant visa appointment (e.g.: business, tourist, visitor, student, work, etc.) online by following the instructions provided at our website at: http://tirana.usembassy.gov/how_to_apply.html. Scheduling appointments online on and after this date is mandatory. We will no longer accept visa appointments via e-mail, fax or mail. Please read the instructions carefully in order to avoid confusion. Only applicants with scheduled appointments will be admitted to the Consular Section. After being scheduled an interview appointment, please do not send passports, visa fees or supporting documentation via mail, fax or e-mail. Supporting documentation must be provided at the time of the visa interview. Visa fees will be collected on the day of the interview. The current non-immigrant visa application fee is \$131.00 or the equivalent in LEK, payable by cash only and is non-refundable. After making the appointment, applicants should come to the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana at 8:00 a.m. Interviews will start at 9:00 a.m., and go until noon. Please plan your time accordingly.

Don't forget! Check out U.S. Embassy Tirana on
YouTube at

<http://www.youtube.com/USEmbassyTirana>.

We're also on Facebook at

[http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tirana-Albania/US-Embassy-Tirana/74591195837!](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tirana-Albania/US-Embassy-Tirana/74591195837)